

MANAGING CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme aims to support Nigerians with conflict resolution, at both the state and community level. Our work focuses on reducing violence, promoting stability and strengthening resilience so that Nigerians feel more safe and secure in their communities.

We work in North Eastern Nigeria in three focal states – Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe – some of the country's most conflict-affected regions.

Our work focuses on the following areas:

- Conflict management, reconciliation and stability in communities
- The role of women in peacebuilding
- Support to women and girls affected by violence
- The reintegration of young people displaced by conflict
- Support to policy makers through research and policy dialogue

The four-year programme (2017-21) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.



The local community attends the MCN-supported game of Jokkor - a traditional sport - to promote cohesion and foster peace amongst young community members. Source: Boroji International

KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in December 2019 – January 2020.

Summary of key activities include:

Conflict management, reconciliation and stability in communities:

- Community peace and safety partnerships mobilise to stop bush fires
- Communities support the role of women in peacebuilding

Addressing sexual and gender-based violence:

- Yobe SARC stakeholders influence passage of the ACJ bill
- Stakeholders suggest strategies for addressing sexual offences
- Adamawa state opens second SARC facility

Economic empowerment initiatives:

- 100 women beneficiaries receive start-up capital

Youth peacebuilding initiatives:

- Youth peer educators contribute to peace
- Borno youths participate in traditional sports for peace events

Community policing initiatives:

- Support for voluntary policing initiatives bearing fruit
- Community accountability forums improving community security

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, RECONCILIATION AND STABILITY

Community peace and safety partnerships mobilise to stop bushfires

The Community Peace and Safety Partnership (CPSP) platforms in Gulani and Gujba LGAs, Yobe State have successfully intervened to reduce the number of bushfires that pose a threat to lives and properties. This followed concerns raised at CPSP meetings held in December. In Gulani, the bushfires were caused by burning bushes to clear land for farming and to increase warm temperatures in the cold weather.

FACTS & FIGURES:

Traditional Justice System
(October 2019)

No of traditional
rulers trained

2,190

No of cases
resolved

5,021

% of cases
resolved

86

After deliberating on the subject, the Gulani CPSP agreed to the following:

- Engage traditional rulers and religious leaders to use their platforms to raise awareness with members of the public about the dangers of bush burning;
- Engage the local government council to conduct public awareness campaigns about bush burning and environmental protection in the mass media;
- Explore channels to engage with parents and teachers to teach children about the dangers of bush burning; and
- Engage smokers, especially those who are involved in cattle rearing, to exercise more caution in disposal of cigarettes.

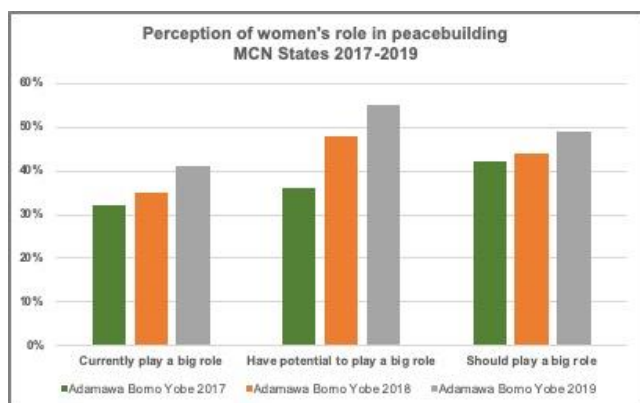
Updates shared at the January meeting indicate that the implementation of agreed actions is underway and the results are encouraging. Traditional and religious leaders have started raising awareness on fire safety and head teachers have commenced education campaigns in the schools. Stakeholders reported improved fire safety awareness and no recent fire accidents.

Similar results were reported at the January meeting of the Gujba CPSP. The steering committee had embarked on an awareness campaign targeted at children who innocently light fires that escalate into infernos.

Communities support the role of women in peace building

The 2019 MCN Annual Perception Survey (APS) demonstrates that communities continue to believe that women can and should play a greater role in peacebuilding in northeast Nigeria.

Figure 1: The role of women in peacebuilding



Source: APS 2019

More than 40% of those surveyed believe that women already play a big role in peacebuilding and nearly 50% believe that women should play a big role. An increase was reported in all areas surveyed since the first survey was conducted in 2017.

The average improvement across the three areas is 12 percentage points. MCN's focus on encouraging to women to participate fully in community peace and safety partnerships, dialogue platforms and community accountability forums may be a factor in the increased confidence in their potential to play a role.

In comparison, the control states of Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba have reported an opposite trend. Since 2017, the results from the annual surveys have consistently fallen and now sit at an average of 33 percentage points below the baseline.

ADDRESSING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Yobe SARC stakeholders influence passage of laws

A key initiative of the Steering Committee of the Yobe State Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) has been advocacy for the enactment of legislation to prosecute sexual offenders. The increase in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) could be attributed to the absence of an effective legislation.

The Steering Committee has been actively engaging the Yobe State House of Assembly and members of the Yobe Justice Sector Reform Team on the issue. A roundtable was held in Kano on December 16-18 to review the legislation required to promote efforts to address SGBV. All pending laws were reviewed and a sub-committee was created to engage the state governor on their passage. As a result, the Hon Mai Mala Malam Buni, the state governor, signed the Yobe State Administration Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) into law in January 2020.

'The enactment of the Administration of Criminal Justice Bill into law in Yobe State shows our efforts have not been in vain. The law gives a timeline for investigations, prosecutions and convictions. It will ensure the speedy delivery of justice and the protection of victims' rights.'

Hon Justice, Ibrahim Wakil Jauro, Yobe State High Court

'The assent of this law is a credit to advocates against SGBV who sensitized the general public on the need for reporting and access to justice. This law will surely give confidence to all stakeholders and families of the victims.'

Chief Magistrate, Khadija Lawan Musa, Yobe State Judiciary

‘A major challenge for addressing SGBV is conviction. One of the gaps is the delay in issuing legal advice. The ACJ Law will make the process more efficient and improve the SGBV response.’

Victor M. Olaiya, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Yobe State Police Command

Stakeholders suggest strategies for addressing sexual offences

The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme organised a policy dialogue on addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Damaturu, Yobe State on 30 January 2020. Stakeholders included government officials in ministries of health, women affairs, youth and sports, and judiciary; security agencies; community and religious leaders; and women, youth and media organisations. The main drivers of SGBV were discussed: the climate of insecurity caused by the insurgency, and the social economic conditions that encourage women to street hawk to gain livelihood.

Participants noted progress made in addressing SGBV in the state, including:

- The establishment of the sexual assault referral centre;
- The establishment of 5 specialist centres to provide care to survivors of SGBV;
- The sustained advocacy by the SARC Steering Committee;
- The increase in convicted sexual offenders going to prison; and
- The passage of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act.

The stakeholders also highlighted key constraints: the socio-economic factors associated with the insurgency; late reporting of sexual offences by families of survivors; poor handling of investigations; delays in prosecution; and social pressures on survivors and their families.

To address these challenges, several resolutions were made:

- More grassroots mobilisation on sexual violence by community and religious leaders, as well as women and youth associations.
- Traditional rulers to establish a local mechanism for reporting and responses to sexual offences (to be piloted in Damaturu and Gujba emirates).
- Regular briefing sessions by the police to inform the public on progress in the prosecution of sexual offences.
- Traditional and religious leaders to reform practices that create a congenial environment for sexual offences.
- Socio-economic empowerment of women and girls to reduce their vulnerability to sexual violence.
- Implementation of the sexual offenders register in Yobe State.
- Ministry of Women Affairs to coordinate the improvement of referrals, including the development of a referral pathway document.

‘This policy dialogue has highlighted the importance of stakeholder collaboration to collectively address sexual and gender-based violence.’

Hon. Sale Samanja, Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice, Yobe State

‘This unending insurgency has made our communities more vulnerable. We will work as religious leaders to change the attitudes of our people and protect women who have become prey to attackers.’

Ustaz Hudu Mohammad, Chief Imam, Yobe State

Adamawa State opens second SARC facility

Advocacy for the establishment of more SARC facilities in Adamawa State by the SARC Steering Committee has yielded results. The Numan Hope Centre was established by the Medical Women’s Association of Nigeria (Adamawa State Chapter). The Centre was inaugurated by Her Excellency Hajiya Lami Umaru Fintiri, Adamawa State First Lady, on 28 January 2020.

The Numan Hope Centre will provide care for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the central regions of the state. This will help mitigate the challenge of long distances that survivors of SGBV travel to receive care and support.

‘We appreciate our partners, especially the Managing Conflict in Nigeria programme of the European Union and the UNFPA.’

Dr. Batula Isah Muhammad, President, MWAN, Adamawa State Chapter, Yola

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

100 women beneficiaries receive start-up capital

MCN is supporting an economic empowerment programme for women in Gombi LGA, Adamawa State. One hundred women were selected and have received their start-up capital for business. The cash transfer followed a series of trainings facilitated by the Women Youth Empowerment and Health Initiative (WHEAHI) and focused on: the management of small-scale business, savings and loans, and conflict management and peacebuilding. WHEAHI will provide mentorship to the beneficiaries and continue to facilitate peace initiatives.

YOUTH PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES

Youth peer educators contributing to peace

MCN is supporting a youth peacebuilding initiative in Maiha LGA, Adamawa State. The peer educator project is implemented by the Society for Promoting the Productivity of Youths (SPPY). The project is designed to train youths to carry out activities that would influence at risk youths to shun anti-social behaviour and violence.

The group hosted a workshop to share the results of their activities and lessons learned. Results showed that youths trained as peer educators have implemented initiatives to address different aspects of security risks. The 98 youths trained in October 2019 have used the knowledge and skills acquired to initiate activities to discourage violence and promote peaceful behaviour.

In Sorau District, peer educators from the Sorau Development Association organised peace building step down training for youths. They also organised dialogue between youths from two communities in conflict to reduce tensions and promote non-violent resolution. A football match was also organised between the groups in conflict to promote peace. The youths who had not been on speaking terms embraced each other at the end of the football competition.

Also, in Sorau District, the peer educators engaged leaders of farmers and herders in conflict over land for farming and grazing, which led to reconciliation of the conflict parties. Furthermore, the youth conducted anti-drug use campaigns and held engagements with youths in churches and mosques to promote tolerance and non-violence.

In Belel District, the peer educators used community drama to promote reconciliation of returning communities displaced as a result of the insurgency. The message of the drama was reinforced by the community, women and youth leaders, and helped break the resolve of youths from conflicting groups to maintain hostile relations.

‘We raised awareness at social gatherings, and there is now evidence of an increase in school enrolment and retention. As a testimony to our success, other organisations are serving as volunteers in our activities.’

Faiza Idris, Alheri Women Development Society, Belel, Maiha LGA, Adamawa State

‘There has been a longstanding frosty relationship in the various communities. After organising a football match that brought both factions together, we were able to achieve reconciliation between them. In order to consolidate the reconciliation, a return match is scheduled to be held soon.’

Auwal Audi, Sorau Development Association, Sorau LGA, Maiha LGA

Youths in four Borno LGAs participate in traditional sport for peace events

The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme supported the organisation of a ‘Jokkor’ game to promote peace and social cohesion between youths in IDP camps and host communities. The events, held on December 12-16 in Jere, Konduga, Mafa, and Maiduguri LGAs, marked the restoration of an old Kanuri tradition.

‘Jokkor’ was traditionally used to demonstrate fitness and strength. The main players are given a turban that is then taken from one pole to another by hopping on one leg, while avoiding tackles by other players. The player who succeeds in getting the turban to the opposite pole without falling is declared the winner. In the past, the game was used to select the worthy prince that would marry a princess. It was also played to mark the end of hostilities and the restoration of peace after violent conflict.

Dignitaries at the sporting event expressed hope that the rediscovery of Jokkor would symbolise the beginning of the end of the insurgency.



Youth play the traditional game of Jokkor. Source: Boroji International

‘The government will work with traditional and religious leaders to support the return of Jokkor as a tool for promoting peace and unity.’

Dr. Bulama Mali Gubio, Secretary General, Borno Elders Forum and representative of the Governor of Borno State

‘We are happy with the support given to our youths. Jokkor is a game that we traditionally use to promote cohesion within the society.’

M. Abadam, General Manager, Borno Radio and Television

‘The game has brought us all together. We are proud of the culture. This shows that even with the war, the culture is still intact.’

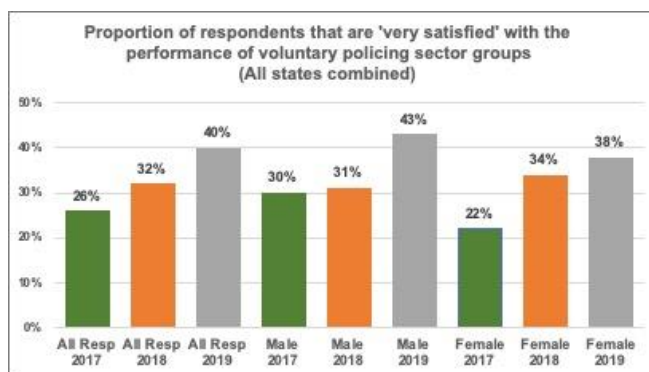
Abba Maisandari, District Head, Maisandari Ward, Borno Emirate

COMMUNITY POLICING INITIATIVES

Support for voluntary policing sector bearing fruit

MCN guidance to voluntary policing sector (VPS) groups across the three focal states is beginning to bear fruit. The MCN Annual Perception Survey (APS) showing that the confidence in the VPS has grown considerably over the past 12 months.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with voluntary policing groups



Source: APS 2019

The proportion of people surveyed that are 'very satisfied' with the performance of the VPS has increased to 40% in 2019 from a baseline of 26% in 2017. A further 53% were generally satisfied with the VPS. Men were generally more satisfied with the VPS than women in 2019, although the difference was not huge.

2019 was the first full year of engagement with the VPS and 42 individual groups have now been supported with training and basic equipment. The programme estimates that close to 700,000 citizens will have benefited from the improved performance as illustrated by the survey results.

Community Accountability Forums improving community security relations

The Community Accountability Forums (CAFs) supported by MCN are contributing to improved relations between the community members and security agencies in targeted locations. By October 2019, the 10 CAFs had discussed 77 concerns, undertaken 27 actions, and achieved 15 results. Examples of the results presented below show the CAFs are helping to bridge gaps between the public and security agencies.

Michika LGA, Adamawa State

The CAF helped to address a potential breakdown of relations between the community and the military over the seizure of fertilizers. Acting on the directives of the government, the military had commenced the seizure of all fertilizers transported in the area. This was to prevent the material, which is needed by farmers, being diverted to insurgent groups for use in the manufacture of explosive devices. The CAF meeting resolved that a delegation of farmers should meet with the military authorities to agree on the way forward. A breakthrough was achieved when the military agreed to allow farmers transport fertilizers - apart from the banned urea fertiliser - in allowable quantities. During the same period, the CAF in Michika also helped informal and formal security service providers agree on the coordination for arresting suspects.

Girei LGA, Adamawa State

The CAF intervened to address a threat to police and community relations posed by the refusal of community members to share information with security operators. Community members refrained from assisting the security agencies with information as a result of fears arising from breaches of confidentiality. Security agencies reportedly were not protecting the identity of informants. The CAF resolved that the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) and select members of the CAF Steering Committee representing community interests should meet to find a lasting solution to the issue. During the meeting, it was agreed that sensitive information should only be shared with senior police officers or directly with the DPO. With the new arrangement, community members now feel safer sharing information.

Mubi North LGA, Adamawa State

A key concern among security agencies was that community leaders (village and ward heads) did not manage sensitive security information correctly. The CAF agreed to facilitate a meeting between the DPO and community leaders to address the issue. Community leaders were informed of the best ways to manage sensitive security information.

Geidam LGA, Yobe State

The CAF intervened on the closure of the Geidam Wednesday Market. Relations between community and the security agencies were strained after the military closed the market indefinitely following attacks by insurgents. The outreach of the CAF steering committee to the military and eminent persons resulted in the military committing to open the market when the security improves. In October 2019, the state governor approved the reopening of the market.

'I will replicate CAF in other areas because it provides great opportunities for effective community engagement.'

DSP Ola F. Ajisebutu, DPO, Nigeria Police Force Maiha LGA, Adamawa State

'The knowledge and skills acquired at the CAF training helped me to stop some angry youths who wanted to burn a police patrol vehicle.'

Alhaji Muhammadu Chabado Abdullahi, Tafida Girei, District Council, Girei, Adamawa State

PROGRESS AGAINST EU INDICATORS

Indicator	Target 2021	Achieved at 31Oct19	Comment
Number of staff from government institutions and internal security forces trained	1210	6,644	Activity Years 2-4
Number of people participating in conflict prevention and peace building activities	2860	21,634	Activity Years 1-4
Total number of community beneficiaries	2,278,580	1,857,175	Activity Years 2-4

UPCOMING ACTIVITY

- Public engagement events on results and lessons of programme interventions
- Community reconciliation initiatives in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Youth peace initiatives in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Meetings and initiatives of the community peace and safety partnerships in target LGAs
- Coordination meetings of voluntary policing sector groups
- Meetings of the community accountability forums in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Advocacy initiatives of SARC Steering Committees in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Operations of family support units in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Community peacebuilding initiatives by women associations and youth groups in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states

ONGOING CHALLENGES

- Continued unrest in the North East and the impact to travel and work outside state capitals
- Capacity of civil society organisations and state institutions
- Continuing challenges around health issues

Find out more

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